

Social Media Engagement and Psychological Wellbeing Among Emerging Adults

Vrinda K¹, Sahira U², Amitha VL³, Divya S Nair⁴

¹M.Sc Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Changanaserry, Kerala, India.

^{2,3}M.Sc, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Changanaserry, Kerala, India.

⁴Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jyoti College of Management and Technology, Changanaserry, Kerala, India.

Email ID: vrindasathyan44@gmail.com¹, zahiraunais@gmail.com², amithavl9074@gmail.com³, divyackmt@gmail.com⁴

Abstract

Social media engagement has become an integral aspect of modern life, with individuals increasingly using these platforms for various purposes, including social interaction, information sharing, gaming and other entertainment purposes. Psychological well-being is a state of positive mental health in which a person experiences a sense of happiness, contentment and fulfillment. A previous study showed that there is a link between social media engagement and increased mental health symptoms. This study aimed to explore the relationship between social media engagement and psychological well-being among emerging adults. A total of 145 participants were recruited using a convenience sampling method. Social media engagement was evaluated using the social media engagement questionnaire (SMEQ) and psychological well-being was evaluated using the psychological well-being scale. The data collected through online surveys, were analyzed using a correlational research design. It was found that social media engagement strongly correlates with the three aspects of psychological well-being among emerging adults. Results indicated that social media engagement was negatively correlated with autonomy, environmental mastery and positive relation with others. These findings suggest that the nature of social media engagement plays a significant role in influencing psychological well-being. Further studies should investigate these changes in greater depth, particularly with larger and more diverse samples, to gain a better understanding of how specific aspects of social media use affect mental health and psychological well-being.

Keywords: Autonomy; Emerging Adults; Psychological well-being; Social Media Engagement

1. Introduction

Emerging adult is the period between the end of youth and the obligations of early adulthood, such as marriage, parenthood, and a stable employment. Emerging adults are characterized by self-focus, identity exploration, volatility, ambivalent emotions and potential. They all seemed to be "feeling in between," with a strong bond with their parents and family but also a sense of independence as they began to move past the challenges of adolescence. (Munsey, 2006). Although social media use is a major part of emerging adults' lives, little is known about how it affects psychological health. The purpose of the current study was to investigate how social media use affects psychological health. According to Bloyd et al. (2007) defined social media engagement as the behavioral manifestation of individuals interaction

with social media platforms encompassing actions such as posting content, reacting to others posts and participating in online discussions. It reflects the extent to which users actively contribute to and participate in social dynamics of online communities. Social media also known as social media networks are web-based services that allow individuals to interact over the internet by creating a public profile, creating a list of users with whom to share connections, and viewing and cross-connections within the system also incorporating photo/video-sharing/ blogging, email and instant messaging. The term social media is a construct derived from two underlying areas of research: 'communication science' and 'sociology' (Peters et al., 2013). Moreover, intensive social media use could cause

negative emotions in adolescents, such as depression and anxiety, through the mediating effects of self-esteem and social comparison. Most previous studies on the effects of social media use on physiology and psychology often use objective indicators, such as “the frequency of internet use,” and “the time people spend online”. When it comes to “engagement,” Hollebeek (2011) suggests a multi-dimensional concept that should comprise not only behavioural (actions) but also cognitive (thoughts) and emotional (feelings) aspects. Psychological wellbeing is a positively framed, comprehensive measure of an individual’s overall wellness (Diener & Chan, 2011). There are many different yet interconnected aspects of psychological well-being such as: satisfaction with life, optimism, positivity, self-worth, self-efficacy, accomplishment, and belonging [1-3]. Psychological well-being is linked to improved health, a higher quality of life, and more fulfilling social relationships all of which can support a peaceful society it is critical to recognize it as a meaningful consequence (Chan, 2018). The need and significance of the study state that understanding the impact of social media engagement on psychological wellbeing is essential for fostering holistic wellbeing and growth. The experiences of emerging adults, who are going through important developmental transitions, have been significantly impacted by the growing integration of social media into daily life. Investigating the effects of various engagement patterns on mental health, such as active versus passive consumption, can help promote healthy social media engagement. This study has implications for improving mental health, guiding mental health interventions, and establishing policies to make online environments safer. By providing a deeper view on social media engagement during emerging adulthood, the study will contribute to the developing body of literature on its psychological effects. Future studies on similar subjects like differences in culture, platform-specific effects, or persistent results may be encouraged by it as well.

1.1. Review of Literature

Farrukh et al. (2023) aims to look into how virtual interaction affects relationships and priorities in real life. The study was done on young adults and the

results underline the need to address the growing trend of social media dependency in familial contexts by indicating that excessive engagement in maintaining online identities has a negative impact on relationships in real life. O’Reilly et al. (2018) goal was to expand the limited knowledge on teenagers’ perceptions of the possible impact of social media on wellbeing and mental health. The study was conducted among young adults and results showed that participants believed social media was addictive, exposing users to behaviours that had a detrimental effect on their emotional wellness, such as cyberbullying, and directly caused mental health issues like sadness and suicidal thoughts. Dhir et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between Social media fatigue and psycho social wellbeing. The study was conducted among adolescents and the results of the study indicate that social media weariness, which in turn leads to increased anxiety and sadness, was considerably triggered by compulsive media use. Social media fatigue was indirectly predicted by FOMO through the mediation of obsessive social media use. Gupta and Irwin (2020) conducted a systematic review to investigate social media engagement’s role in public health communication. Their objectives included evaluating social media platforms’ effectiveness in disseminating health information and promoting health behaviors. However, they noted the need for more research on long-term impacts and challenges like misinformation and algorithm changes [4-7].

2. Method

2.1. Objectives

- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and psychological well being among emerging adults.
- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and autonomy among emerging adults.
- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and environmental mastery among emerging adults.
- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and personal growth among emerging adults.
- To assess the relationship between social

media engagement and positive relation with others among emerging adults.

- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and purpose in life among emerging adults
- To assess the relationship between social media engagement and self-acceptance among emerging adults [8-10].

2.2. Hypotheses

- H1: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and psychological well-being among emerging adults
- H2: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and autonomy among emerging adults.
- H3: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and environmental mastery among emerging adults.
- H4: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and personal growth among emerging adults
- H5: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and positive relation with others among emerging adults.
- H6: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and purpose in life among emerging adults.
- H7: There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and self-acceptance among emerging adults.

2.3. Sample and Sampling Procedure

This study is intended to study the relationship between social media engagement and psychological

well-being among emerging adults. The sample collected from 145 emerging adults in which 93 females and 52 males of age group 18-25 were included in this study. A convenience sampling method were used to collect data and administered using google forms. The Emerging adults of age group 18 to 25 were included and those who are illiterate were excluded from the study. The correlational research design were used and data is analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The survey was conducted with the consent of the participating students. The first sheet of the survey gathered socio-demographic details, such as age, gender and educational qualification. Confidentiality of their response were assured to the participants. The collected data was then analyzed to draw conclusions relevant to the study [11-12].

2.4. Tools Used

Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ) were proposed by Przybylski et al. (2013) to measure social media engagement which consists of 5 items and the statements were scored by eight-point Likert scale. SMEQ forms a fair reliability (Cronbach's alpha-.82 to .89) and the scale has a convergent validity. Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-being proposed by Celestine, N. (2021) to measure psychological well-being which consists of 18 items and the statements were scored by seven-point Likert scale. It measures six dimensions of psychological wellbeing such as autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life and self-acceptance. Psychological well-being scale has a test-retest reliability ranging from .88 to .81 and the scale has a significant convergent validity.

Table 1 Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient and P Value of Social Media Engagement, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relation with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-Acceptance

Variables		Autonomy	Environmental Mastery	Personal Growth	Positive Relation with Others	Purpose in Life	Self - acceptance
Social Media	r value	-.184	-.246	-.055	-.180	.118	-.131
Engagement	P value	.027	.003	.510	.031	.157	.116

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

Table 1 shows that Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient and p value of Social Media Engagement, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Positive Relation with Others, Purpose in Life and Self-acceptance. From the table it is evident that the correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and autonomy is significantly negatively correlated at -0.184 and corresponding p value is $.027$ and therefore the hypothesis is accepted. There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and autonomy among emerging adults. The correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and environmental mastery is negatively correlated at -0.246 and corresponding p value is $.003$, hence the hypothesis "There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and environmental mastery among emerging adults" is accepted. The correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and Personal growth is negatively correlated -0.055 and corresponding p value is $.510$, hence the hypothesis is rejected. The correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and positive relation with others is negatively at -0.180 and corresponding p value is $.031$, hence the hypothesis "There will be a significant relationship between social media engagement and positive relation with others among emerging adults" is accepted. The correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and purpose in life is positively correlated at 0.118 and corresponding p value is $.157$, hence the hypothesis is rejected. The correlation coefficient for the variable social media engagement and self-acceptance is negatively correlated at -0.131 and corresponding p value is $.116$, hence the hypotheses is rejected.

3.2. Discussion

The aim of the study was to analyse the significant relationship between social media engagement and psychological well-being among emerging adults. Our result indicates that social media engagement had a significant negative correlation with autonomy. Increased social media use may play a key role in influencing experiences and developing autonomy in

today's digital world. West et al. (2023) reveals that social media significantly influences the unique experiences of adolescents in terms of autonomy development compared to previous generations. There is a negative significant correlation between social media engagement and environmental mastery. The overuse of social media tends to be grabs our attention and time, it may lead to limit the ability of an individual to manage environment effectively. The results also find a negative significant correlation between social media engagement and positive relation with others. Excessive involvement in social media may diminish the quality of interpersonal interaction, making hard to build strong, meaningful connections in real life relationships. Farrukh et al. (2023) indicates that excessive online identity maintenance negatively impacts real-life relationships, underscoring the need to address the increasing trend of social media dependency in familial settings. The results also indicated a positive correlation between social media engagement and purpose in life, and negative correlations with personal growth and self-acceptance, but were not statistically significant. The lack of significance indicates that the observed relationships may be influenced by contextual factors or individual variations in social media engagement.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to find the relationship between social media engagement and psychological well-being among Emerging Adults. It was found that a significant relationship exists between social media engagement with autonomy, environmental mastery positive relationships with others in emerging adults.

Acknowledgement

The author appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be able to be mentioned.

References

- [1]. Munsey, C. (2006). Emerging adults: The in-between age [Dataset]. In PsycEXTRA Dataset. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e512802006-035>.

- [2]. Peters, K., et al. (2013). Social media metrics — a framework and guidelines for managing social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 281-298.
- [3]. Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 27(7-8), 785-807.
- [4]. Diener, E., & Chan, M. Y. (2011). Happy People Live Longer: Subjective Well-Being Contributes to Health and Longevity. *Applied Psychology Health and Well-Being*, 3(1), 1–43. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-0854.2010.01045.x>
- [5]. Chan, M. (2018). Digital communications and psychological well-being across the life span: Examining the intervening roles of social capital and civic engagement. *Telematics and Informatics*, 35(6), 1744–1754.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2018.05.003>
- [6]. Farrukh, M., Hassan, A., & Ramazan, T. (2023). Unraveling Virtual Threads: The Impact of Social Media Engagement on Family Dynamics and Real-Life Relationships. *Research Journal for Societal Issues*, 5(3), 328–344. <https://doi.org/10.56976/rjsi.v5i3.159>
- [7]. O'Reilly, M., Dogra, N., Whiteman, N., Hughes, J., Eruyar, S., & Reilly, P. (2018). Is social media bad for mental health and wellbeing? Exploring the perspectives of adolescents. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 23(4), 601–613. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359104518775154>
- [8]. Dhir, A., Yossatorn, Y., Kaur, P., & Chen, S. (2018). Online social media fatigue and psychological wellbeing—A study of compulsive use, fear of missing out, fatigue, anxiety and depression. *International Journal of Information Management*, 40, 141–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.01.012>
- [9]. Gupta, A., & Irwin, J. D. (2020). The role of social media engagement in public health communication: A systematic review. *Health Education & Behavior*, 47(2), 218-229.
- [10]. Przybylski, A. K., et al. (2013). Social media engagement questionnaire (SMEQ).
- [11]. Celestine, N. (2021). The Ryff Scales of Psychological Wellbeing: Your How-to Guide. Positive
- [12]. West, M., Rice, S., & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2023). Mid-Adolescents' social media use: Supporting and suppressing autonomy. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 074355842311684. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584231168402>